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# GURU NANAK

## THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

*by*

**Dr. Harnam Singh Shan**

Guru Nanak Professor of Sikh Studies  
PANJAB UNIVERSITY CHANDIGARH

*with*

*Foreword by* **Chief Justice R. S. Narula**

*Preface by* **Padam Bhushan Suraj Bhan**



**DEPARTMENT OF GURU NANAK SIKH STUDIES**  
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of Sri Guru Nanak Dev ji—thoroughly revised and enlarged.

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# **GURU NANAK**

**THE MAN  
AND  
HIS MISSION**



## INTRODUCTION

The Department of Guru Nanak Sikh Studies was initiated in 1970 in pursuance of a scheme of the Panjab Government and the University Grants Commission to set up Guru Nanak Chairs at some universities of India in commemoration of the Birth-Quincentenary of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji. The Panjab University was the first to establish such a department for study and research of the various aspects of the life, work and teachings of Guru Nanak, in particular; and of the Sikh religion, culture and literature, and of religious thought, in general. It was formally inaugurated in November, 1970 by Sardar Parkash Singh Badal, the then Chief Minister of the Panjab.

The Department has now undertaken, under the editorship of the undersigned, the preparation of a series of source-books and reference works to serve as basic tools for the scientific and systematic study of the religion and history of the Sikhs.

The first on the list is a *Chronology of the Sikhs* which is going to be the first-ever complete historical record of the five centuries of Sikhism in the form of an up-to-date chronological register of the main events since the birth of Guru Nanak in 1469. The work is being based on a careful and critical study of original and secondary source-material, lying scattered in India and abroad. It will attempt, thereby, a factual statement and an objective assessment of the political, social, religious, literary and cultural developments in the Indian Subcontinent *vis-a-vis* Sikhism during the five centuries of its existence. It will also include a complete index and a comprehensive bibliography. The volume is expected to meet a long-felt need of the students and teachers, scholars and researchers, writers and journalists, speakers and general readers of the religion, history, culture, lore and literature of the Sikhs.

The second such reference work taken in hand is the preparation of a comprehensive and systematic index of *The Sikh Review*—the only regular, authentic and well-established scholarly journal of the Sikhs in the English language.

Some new proposals for the further development of the Department

have also been prepared and submitted under the Fifth Five-Year Plan. These include the—

1. Preparation of a comprehensive survey of the historical shrines, *sangats* and *deras* of the Sikhs in and outside India ;
2. Institution of postgraduate teaching in its field of study
3. Publication of the *Panjab University Journal of Sikh Studies*; and the
4. Construction of Guru Nanak Bhavan to provide the Department with a proper and permanent habitation.

The Department has also, now, started the enrolment and guidance of candidates for the Ph.D. degree of the Panjab University under the supervision of its Professor and Head. A good number of candidates are working at present under his guidance and supervision on various subjects for the award of the Ph. D. degree.

The Reference Library of the Department is expanding fast. The Panjab Government so generously sanctioned a special grant of Rs. 20,000 for its expansion. A very large number of rare and new books and back-issues of important journals have been added through this munificence.

A *Series of Lectures on Sikh Studies*, to be given periodically by eminent scholars in the field, has also been instituted recently.

In addition, the Department has planned to publish a *Series of Papers and Monographs on Sikh Studies*. The present paper, *Guru Nanak : The Man And His Mission*, is the second of this Series to be placed before the learned readers.

I am specially beholden to Padam Bhushan Shri Suraj Bhan Ji, Vice-Chancellor, to the Syndicate and to the Senate of the Panjab University for having very kindly sanctioned the project and provided funds for it.

Guru Nanak Chair  
Panjab University Chandigarh  
April 10, 1974

Harnam Singh Shan,  
Professor & Head of the  
Deptt. of Guru Nanak Sikh Studies.



## FOREWORD

by

*Hon'ble Mr. Justice R. S. Narula*

*Chief Justice, Punjab & Haryana High Court, Chandigarh*

Two out of many advantages of the Guru Nanak Quincentenary celebrations have been the establishment of Gurū Nanak Chairs in several universities, and the impetus given to the creation and publication of literature to project the image of true Sikhism based on the teachings of Guru Nanak — the preceptor who has held for the last five centuries an unrivalled and unique position amongst the spiritual leaders and enlightened teachers and guides of the world on account of the everlasting indelible imprints left by him on the human minds, irrespective of the caste, creed or sex of the mortal coil in which those minds were encased.

Dr. Harnam Singh Shan, who is the Professor & Head of the Department of Guru Nanak Sikh Studies in the Panjab University, Chandigarh, has been fortunate enough to contribute to this literary treasure, which is meant to enlighten and salvage the human beings living in this chaotic crumbling world from the abyss of devastating materialism by spreading Guru Nanak's message of devotion to the omnipotent and omnipresent Creator, of truth, love, humility, surrender, service before self, religious tolerance, universal brotherhood of man and social justice.

Dr. Shan has in this publication made a commendable effort to bring out at one place the pith and substance of the basic mission of Guru Nanak synchronised with brief anecdotes of what one could see of his personal life from outside. The author has taken pains to fill in a gap in the handy literature on Guru Nanak's mission by publishing this paper. As a result of his scholarly studies of Guru Nanak's life and mission and of the *Gurbani* enshrined in *Guru Granth Sahib*, Dr. Shan has been able to weave each aspect of the Guru's teachings around the directly relevant *Shabads* which fell from the holy mouth of the Guru himself.

It has given me real pleasure, great satisfaction, and good deal of inspiration to go through the type-script of this valuable monograph.

It brings to light at one place in a very lucid manner within a very narrow compass all the aspects of the Guru's life and teachings including his logical philosophy of creating disdain for ego, jealousy, lust, anger and avarice (the 5 enemies of man) without resorting to jungles or giving up full worldly life and enjoyment.

This paper should be useful not only to the devotees of Guru Nanak or members of the Sikh religion, but also to all others who may be interested in getting a bird's-eye view of Guru Nanak's life and mission.

Dr. Harnam Singh Shan has published and produced large number of books, papers and monographs on the life and teachings of Guru Nanak. He has had the advantage of great study and research on the subject not only in India, but also in Pakistan, in United Kingdom and Europe, in Persia, Germany and U.S.A. He has worked in some important universities, libraries, museums and art-galleries in many countries. He has been a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland, London; a member of the Societe Asiatique, Paris, France; an adviser of the Canada Sikh Research Centre, Ottawa, Canada; a member of the Society for Asian Folklore, Bloomington, U.S.A., and many other academic and cultural societies and associations in and outside India. He has taken part in various important national and international conferences and seminars. He is full of zeal in the work which has been entrusted to him by the Lord, and I wish him all success in his mission.

Chandigarh  
August 16, 1974.

R. S. NARULA  
Chief Justice.

## PREFACE

by

*Padam Bhushan Suraj Bhan, M.A. (Pb. & London)*

*Vice-Chancellor, Panjab University, Chandigarh*

Guru Nanak appeared in India in one of the darkest periods of its history when the human scene was full of religious strife of the darkest kind, supported by long-entrenched superstitions and a selfish and rapacious priestcraft. To this malady was added the existence of the rule of invaders from abroad, who were an army of occupation determined to rule over the natives with every weapon in the armoury of terror, to which the spur of the zeal for religious persecution was added. In this situation Guru Nanak sought light, with his soul in deep agony at the afflictions of Indian humanity, from God, the Creator. The light came to him, as he was the God-appointed man sent to guide mankind.

In the words of the great Sikh poet and savant, Bhai Gurdas, Guru Nanak saw the world as far as thought could go, burning—burning in sin, superstition and suffering. To annul the suffering of mankind, he took upon himself to an odyssey of the spirit—to go to the farthest corners of India and outside, to preach the worship of the one God, the Supreme Being — the *Om*, *Brahm* and *Purusha* of the Indian spiritual tradition — and to bring mankind to establish the relationship of love and brotherhood with one another, as against the strife of clan with clan and the internecine strife of caste and sub-caste with their coevals.

Not neglecting the Muslims who by now had come to form an important part of the Indian population, he called God also by the names familiar to them — as *Allah*, *Khuda*, *Rahim*, *Karim*, *Parvardagar* and others — and exhorted them to live the pure moral and spiritual life of religion as against its form and ritual. The same exhortation he conveyed to the Hindus, the elaborate formalities of whose religion without the moral-spiritual essence, he called a sham, a husk and a show. In innumerable places he denounced the mere observance of religious ritual — the sacred thread, the bathing at the spots held

sacred, the various inhibitions current among the Hindus—and called upon those who called themselves Hindus to inculcate the true spirit of Dharma with its attributes of compassion, purity, continence and the four Supreme Values leading to *Moksha* or Liberation from transmigration, which in essence meant rising above the lower desires.

All this purificatory teaching he brought to the people and withal made the moral way of life the essence of the practice of religion. It was his liberating thought which instilled the people particularly of the north-western regions of India with the spirit of heroism and inspired them to fight the entrenched tyrannies of centuries, braving torture, suffering and martyrdom. For all this he was, indeed, the Redeemer, the Liberator of the people, both in the spiritual and mundane senses.

Preaching to Brahmin, Yogi, Muslim and the votaries of the various creeds, the Guru emphasized the supreme importance of man keeping himself stationed in the midst of the moral duty which devolves on him; and while living in the world keeping himself above moral weakness. To the Yogis, absorbed in esoteric spiritual exercises in the farther Himalayas, he said, in the words of his devotee, Bhai Gurdas. :

The moon of righteousness lies hidden under  
the darkness of inequity ;]  
The dark night of evil has covered the earth  
I have set out to find the light of truth.  
The earth is in the grip of wickedness ;  
the Bull is groaning under the grievous burden.  
The enlightened ones have hidden themselves  
in the mountain-caves ;  
Who might then save the world ?

Thus, as is obvious, the Guru emphasized the supreme importance of moral duty, as against barren austerity and the illusory search after 'Power' (*Shakti*). This was also what the author of the *Gita*, two thousand years before, had sought to emphasize through the allegorical tale of the reluctant hero, Arjuna, whom Krishna, the Lord, persuaded to the performance of Duty (*Dharma*) and not to give way to the mood of retreat and pessimism.

An extremely significant episode in which Guru Nanak's mind and soul were involved was his reaction to the invasion of India by :

Babar. The Guru was not an individualist in his religious practice. Rather than look with helpless unconcern on the great public events of the age, he felt the agony, sorrow and suffering of the Indian people, and voiced these in deeply moving hymns, which have come collectively to be known as *Babar Vani* (Babar's command). The Guru has echoed in these the pain and suffering of the people. Calling upon the Creator, the Guru asked in one of these hymns :

The people wailed in their agony of suffering  
 didst thou feel no compassion for them ?  
 Thou art the Creator of all—if a powerful foe  
 molests one equally powerful  
 little would be there to complain.  
 But if the ferocious tiger falls upon a herd of kine  
 then must the master be called to account.

In the sublimest crescendo of his agony and the vision born of it, the Guru utters a prophecy :

Suffering there will be for man  
 if he forgets the way of God;  
 But by following  
 God's way, man may hope for happiness.  
 Foolish it is to blame the Creator  
 for our own lapses.  
 All that happens is the manifestation of the  
 Divine Law which is just and holy.

Guru Nanak warned those in his age who held power, of the might of the Divine wrath which must fall on tyrants and evildoers; and he mentioned the examples of the arrogant Ravana, Duryodhana and Harnakasha (Harinyakashyapa) whom God had struck down when they, in the course of inequity, thought themselves to be invincible. Several times, referring to the Divine Power which brooks no evil, he has called God *Asur-Sanghar* (Destroyer of Demons) thus reminding the people of hope in Divine Justice which must come into operation when inequity becomes oppressive. It was this vision of his particularly which released powerful forces after his time to liberate Panjab and its adjoining regions from established tyranny.

From Guru Nanak's soul emanated the light which has given to us in India high moral values, which we can neglect only at our peril. His vision was deep and comprehensive; and while it was spiritual at the core, it related at the same time the life of the soul with

moral duty. He thus removed the glaring lacuna in religious life which divorces it from the sense of comprehensive social responsibility, whether by turning of man into a recluse or by emphasizing only the externals of religion.

Guru Nanak was, thus, a Path-Finder of Humanity. His message of Love and Universal Brotherhood has special relevance and significance in a world torn by strife and mutual hatred. He was no believer in man-made barriers which go to divide rather than unite. At this particular hour when the need for international understanding is paramount, the teachings of this great saviour of mankind can be of tremendous value.

It has, therefore, been a welcome decision of the Panjab Government to institute Chairs at the universities with a view to studying and carrying forth the message of this great seer. It is the function of the universities to conserve culture as also to disseminate culture in its various forms and aspects. The Panjab University was the foremost to accept the proposal, so as to pay homage to one of the greatest luminaries of mankind, as also to serve as an instrument to spread his luminous message of love, peace and harmony which the world needs so direly today.

Dr. Harnam Singh Shan, Professor and Head of the Department of Guru Nanak Sikh Studies, has taken up this assignment in a spirit of devotion and with a sense of commitment. A reputed scholar, a great votary of Sikhism and a devout exponent of all that Guru Nanak and Sikhism stand for, he has been at pains to activate the Department so as to achieve the goals which he has set for himself for its development.

His project to bring out Papers and Monographs on Sikh Studies as a part of his programme, has much to commend itself and should help the University to fulfill one of its important tasks of spreading culture and enriching human life. True education connotes contact with greatness in some form or the other, and these monographs and papers should serve as a means of true education. Dr. Shan's contribution in this direction should, in due course, prove highly valuable. This particular monograph, *Guru Nanak : The Man And His Mission*, makes excellent reading and should furnish great inspiration for the readers.

Panjab University  
Chandigarh, April 27, 1974.

Suraj Bhan  
Vice-Chancellor.

...

## GURU NANAK

### THE MAN AND HIS MISSION

Pure he was, so purity he preached  
Lovely he was, so love he preached  
Humble he was, so humility he preached  
Divine he was, so divinity he preached.<sup>1</sup>

Guru Nanak is widely known and highly respected as a prophet, a seer, a saint, a saviour, a redeemer, a divine master, a spiritual preceptor. He enjoyed so much reverence and popularity even in his own lifetime that his name became a legend, both at home and abroad. The religious-minded of his own country and community, calling him *Nanak Deva* and interpreting *Deva* as 'God,' considered him God on the earth or an *Avatara*, that is an incarnation of God. He was acclaimed as *Pir-i-Hind*<sup>2</sup> in the Muslim world abroad, and his name still stands inscribed as *Hazrat Rab-i-Majid Baba Nanak Faqir Aulia* on a memorial in Baghdad,<sup>3</sup> the citadel of Muslim culture. At home, while his Hindu devotees called him *Satguru*<sup>4</sup> *Nanak Dev*, the Muslims called him *Hazrat*<sup>5</sup> *Nanak Shah*, thus vying with each other to proclaim him as their own in his name and appellation, too. The laymen, particularly of the Indian Subcontinent, have all along been remembering him as *Baba*, the Grandfather Nanak. People of all castes and callings still revere him as the *Guru* of the Hindus and the *Pir* of the Muslims, cherished as such in the following popular verse :

Guru Nanak Shah Faqir  
Hindu Ka Guru, Mussalman Ka Pir.<sup>6</sup>

1. Layal, N. S., *Varieties of Thoughts and Tests*, New Delhi-1964, p. 5.
2. That is, the Divine Master of India.
3. See Ananda Acharya, Swami, *Snow Birds*, London-1919, Canto XC, p. 182; Sewaram Singh, S., *The Divine Master*, Lahore-1923, pp. 154 and 157.
4. That is, the True Teacher and Guide.
5. That is, His Holiness, His Worship.
6. ਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਹ ਫਕੀਰ,  
ਹਿੰਦੂ ਕਾ ਗੁਰੂ, ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ਕਾ ਪੀਰ.  
According to Bhai Gurdas also—  
ਸਤਿਗੁਰੂ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਵੇ, 'ਗੁਰਾਂ ਗੁਰੇ' ਹੋਇਆ (ਵਾਰ ਨੰ: ੩, ਪਉੜੀ ਨੰ: ੧੨).

His first biographer, the highly learned Bhai Gurdas (1551-1637), has described him as *Vadda Purakh*<sup>1</sup> (i.e. Great Man), *Akal-roop*<sup>2</sup> (i.e. Godlike) and *Jagat-Gur-Baba*<sup>3</sup> (i.e. the Divine World Teacher). He has also stated in his most popular verse that

God, the benefactor, heard the cry of the  
suffering humanity  
And sent him hence to the world ;<sup>4</sup>

and that—

With his advent, the mist of ignorance  
and sham disappeared from the world  
And light spread everywhere.<sup>5</sup>

The holy compiler and editor of his sacred writings, Guru Arjan Dev (1563-1606), called him 'Guru-God'<sup>6</sup> and observed ;

What to say of me, the ignorant one,  
Millions of sinners have been saved by his instruction.  
Whosoever happened to see or hear him,  
Was saved from the ordeal of being cast  
into the womb again.<sup>7</sup>

1. 'ਵਡਾ ਪੁਰਖ' ਪਰਗਟਿਆ,  
ਕਲਜੁਗ ਅੰਦਰ ਜੋਤ ਜਗਾਈ (ਵਾਰ ਨੰ: ੧, ਪਉੜੀ ਨੰ: ੪੪).
2. ਇਕ ਬਾਬਾ 'ਅਕਾਲ ਰੂਪ', ਦੂਜਾ ਰਬਾਬੀ ਮਰਦਾਨਾ (ਵਾਰ ਨੰ: ੧, ਪਉੜੀ ਨੰ: ੩੫).
3. i. 'ਜਗਤ ਗੁਰੂ', ਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਦੇਉ (ਵਾਰ ਨੰ: ੨੪, ਪਉੜੀ ਨੰ: ੨).  
ii. ਜਾਹਰ ਪੀਰ 'ਜਗਤ ਗੁਰ ਬਾਬਾ' (ਵਾਰ ਨੰ: ੨੪, ਪਉੜੀ ਨੰ: ੪).
4. ਸੁਣੀ ਪੁਕਾਰ ਦਾਤਾਰ ਪ੍ਰਭੁ,  
ਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਜਗ ਮਾਂਹਿ ਪਠਾਯਾ (ਵਾਰ ਨੰ: ੧, ਪਉੜੀ ਨੰ: ੨੩).
5. ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਨਾਨਕ ਪਰਗਟਿਆ,  
ਮਿਟੀ ਧੁੰਧ, ਜਗ ਚਾਨਣ ਹੋਆ (ਵਾਰ ਨੰ: ੧, ਪਉੜੀ ਨੰ: ੨੭).  
cf. Gurdas, Bhai, *Varan*, Amritsar—1600 (c.), canto no. 1—stanzas no. 23, 27, 35 & 44 ; canto no. 3—stanza no. 12 ; canto no. 24—stanzas no. 2 & 4.
6. ਬਲਿਓ ਚਰਾਗੁ ਅੰਧਾਰ ਮਹਿ, ਸਭ ਕਲਿ ਉਧਰੀ ਇਕ ਨਾਮ ਧਰਮ  
ਪ੍ਰਗਟੁ ਸਗਲ ਹਰਿ ਭਵਨ ਮਹਿ, ਜਨੁ ਨਾਨਕ 'ਗੁਰੁ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ'.  
cf Arjan Dev, *Sri Guru Granth Sahib, Swaiyye Sri Mukh Bakya*, M.V, Amritsar—1604, p. 1387.
7. ਸੇ ਮੂਰਖ ਕੀ ਕੇਤਕ ਬਾਤ ਹੈ, ਕੋਟਿ ਪਤਾਧੀ ਤਰਿਆ ਰੇ ;  
ਗੁਰੁ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਜਿਨ ਸੁਣਿਆ ਪੇਸਿਆ, ਸੇ ਫਿਰੇ ਗਤਤਾਜਿ ਨ ਪਰਿਆ ਰੇ.  
*Ibid.*, Rag Sorath, M.V. p. 612.



His earliest-known biography, the *Janamsakhi*, has also described him as 'Guru-God', addressed as such by God himself as under :

Nanak ! whoever shall be blessed by you,  
Shall be blessed by me, too.

My name is *Parbrahm-Parmeshar*

(The Supreme Spirit—God)

And your name is *Gur-Parmeshar* (Guru-God).<sup>1</sup>

Sodhi Meharban (1581-1640) has, however, described him in another way in a soliloquy of the cruel thags :

He does not look like a man of the world.

He is not a faqir either.

He is some great man who seems to have had  
the privilege of meeting God.

To our good luck, we are meeting in him God himself.<sup>2</sup>

Sohan Singh also tells us that whosoever met him, particularly during the last phase of his life, said that "never in their lives had they seen a man so near to God."<sup>3</sup>

Yes, he was very much near to God, rather one with Him ; yet he was a man, first and last a man, though a unique man, indeed ! He never claimed himself to be a saint or a seer, a saviour or a redeemer, much less Almighty God or God-incarnate. He did not arrogate to himself any attribute of God in the absolute sense. As a matter of fact, he did not claim for himself any thing more than a human being. So much so, that he himself is stated to have proclaimed:

I am composed of five elements

And my name is Nanak.<sup>4</sup>

1. ਤਬਿ ਫਿਰ ਆਗਿਆ ਆਈ, ਹੁਕਮ ਹੋਇਆ, "ਨਾਨਕ ਜਿਸ ਉਪਰ ਤੇਰੀ ਨਦਰ, ਤਿਸ ਉਪਰ ਮੇਰੀ ਨਦਰ; ਜਿਸ ਉਪਰ ਤੇਰਾ ਕਰਮ, ਤਿਸ ਹੀ ਉਪਰ ਮੇਰਾ ਭੀ ਕਰਮ। ਮੇਰਾ ਨਾਉਂ 'ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ਰ', ਤੇਰਾ ਨਾਉਂ 'ਗੁਰੁ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ਰ'"। ਤਬ ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਬਾ ਪੈਰੀਂ ਪਇਆ, ਤਬ ਸਿਰਪਾਉ ਦਰਗਾਹੋਂ ਬਾਬੇ ਨੇ ਮਿਲਿਆ।"  
cf. *Puratan Janamsakhi*, ed. by Dr. Bhai Vir Singh, Amritsar—1926, p. 18.
2. "...ਤਬ ਇਤਨੇ ਹੀ ਸੁਨਣੇ ਨਾਲ ਉਨ੍ਹਾਂ ਦੇ ਕਪਾਟ ਖੁਲਿ ਗਏ ਜਿ, "ਏਹੁ ਸੈਂਸਾਰੀ ਨਾਹੀਂ ਅਤੇ ਫਕੀਰੁ ਭੀ ਨਾਹੀ, ਏਹੁ ਕੋਈ ਮਹਾਂ ਪੁਰਖੁ ਹੈ; ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ੁਰ ਕੰਉ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹੋਆ ਹੈ; ਅਸਾਡੀ ਭਾਗੀਂ ਪਰਮੇਸ਼ੁਰ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਹੈ; ਆਵਹੁ ਏਸ ਦੀ ਪੈਰੀਂ ਪੈ ਕੇ ਏਹਿ ਕਰਮ ਛਡਹੁ, ਅਤੇ ਏਹੁ ਜਿ ਆਖੇ ਸੁ ਕਰਹੁ।" ਤਬ ਉਹ ਸਟਦਿਆਂ ਛਾਹੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਬਾਬੇ ਨਾਨਕ ਜੀ ਕੀ ਪੈਰੀਂ ਪਏ।  
cf. *A Janamsakhi of Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*, ed. by Dr. Kirpal Singh & Shamsher Singh Ashok, Amritsar—1962, p. 296.
3. Sohan Singh, *The Seeker's Path*, Delhi—1959, p. xiv.
4. ਪੰਜ ਤਤ ਕਾ ਪੁਤਲਾ, ਨਾਨਕ ਮੇਰਾ ਨਾਉ.  
cf. Bala, Bhai, *Janamsakhi, Sri Guru Nanak Dev Ji*, printed version (Gulab Singh & Sons), Lahore—1922.

He, thus, always preferred to be known as 'man', a man among men, about whom, including himself, he once said :

We are men of but one breath,  
And do not even know the span of  
Our existence and the time of our death.<sup>1</sup>

He was even so conscious of this that he made it clear a number of times in his own writings, preserved so far in their original and authentic form. Referring once to the various remarks made about his person, not understanding thereby his God-intoxication, he said :

Some call me a goblin, some a spirit.  
Some call me a mere forsaken man.  
But I, the mad Nanak, have lost my reason  
In pursuit of the King, God ;  
And I know none other than God.<sup>2</sup>

His great emphasis on the oneness, immanence and transcendence of God, and his creed of the Fatherhood of God and Brotherhood of Man are more than enough to prove that he never even thought of posing himself to be anything like that. His well-known definition and description of God reads :

There is but one God.  
His name is Eternal Truth.  
He is the creator of the universe and  
maker of everything.  
He is devoid of fear and enmity.  
He is immortal, unborn and self-existent.<sup>3</sup>

1. ਹਮ ਆਦਮੀ ਹਾਂ ਇਕ ਦਮੀ,  
ਮੁਹਲਤਿ ਮੁਹਤੁ ਨ ਜਾਣਾ.  
cf. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., *Raga Dhanasari*, p. 660.
2. ਕੋਈ ਆਖੈ ਭੂਤਨਾ ਕੋ ਕਹੈ ਬੇਤਾਲਾ,  
ਕੋਈ ਆਖੈ ਆਦਮੀ ਨਾਨਕ ਵੇਚਾਰਾ ।  
ਭਇਆ ਦਿਵਾਨਾ ਸਾਹ ਕਾ ਨਾਨਕੁ ਬਉਰਾਨਾ,  
ਹਉ ਹਰਿ ਬਿਨੁ ਅਵਰੁ ਨ ਜਾਨਾ.  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Maru*, p. 991.
3. ੴ ਸਤਿ ਨਾਮੁ, ਕਤਾ ਪੁਰਖੁ, ਨਿਰਭਉ, ਨਿਰਵੈਰੁ,  
ਅਕਾਲ ਮੂਰਤਿ, ਅਜੂਨੀ, ਸੈਭੇ, ਗੁਰਪ੍ਰਸਾਦਿ.  
*Ibid.*, *Mul Mantra*, p. 1.

How could one so wise and devoted to just one God, attribute to himself all those or any of those divine and unique attributes? People have, no doubt, been ascribing divinity to him and taking him to be identical with God; but he never, not even once, cherished any such claim or pretension. Syed Latif is, therefore, right in saying that "unlike the Arabian Prophet, he (Nanak) never claimed that what he himself preached or addressed to the people was inspired or revealed to him from Heaven; nor did he ever boast of being gifted with supernatural powers, or attribute any of his acts to a power not at the command of other men. 'He said, he was a man among men, mortal as they were and sinful.' 'He was a *faqir*', said he, 'before the threshold of God.' 'Thou art the incorporeal Creator, and Nanak is Thy slave: *Tue hae Nirankar Kartar, Nanak Banda Tera*,'<sup>1</sup>—was the theme of the good-hearted, pious Nanak. He took particular delight in causing this theme to be played on the *rabab* (rebeck) by his favourite actor (first follower) and the companion of his toils, (Bhai) Mardana. His doctrine was that God was all-in-all, and he taught all to believe in the Creator, the Lord of Lords, the one God, self-existent, incomprehensible, omnipotent, without beginning and everlasting."<sup>2</sup>

## II

But the Guru rightly apprehended, at the same time, that owing to the usual tendency of deifying holy men and founders of religions, his followers might deify him also and regard him as God or His incarnation. He, therefore, stressed it repeatedly that God was one. He was unborn and all the supposed seers and prophets were insignificant in the context of that Supreme Reality :

There is but one True Lord in the whole universe,  
There is no other.<sup>3</sup>

and that—

God is the only Spouse  
All other beings are His brides.<sup>4</sup>

1. ਤੂੰ ਹੀ ਹੈ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਕਰਤਾਰ  
ਨਾਨਕ ਬੰਦਾ ਤੇਰਾ.
2. Latif, S. M., *History of the Punjab*, Jhang-1889, pp. 246-47.
3. ਸਤਬੇ ਸਾਚਾ ਦੇਵੁ ਹੈ, ਦੂਜਾ ਨਾਹੀ ਕੋਇ.  
cf. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op cit, *Rig Dāmasari*, p. 660.
4. ਠਾਕੁਰੁ ਦੇਵੁ, ਸਭਾਈ ਨਾਰਿ.  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Rinkall*, p. 933.

Verily, he considered himself as one of the innumerable 'brides' of that only Spouse. All his hymns are, mostly, addressed to Him. He also asserted repeatedly :

My Master is one.  
One alone, one-in-one.<sup>1</sup>

and that—

The Infinite, Transcendental Lord,  
The Supreme God is the one  
Whom Nanak has known as His Master.<sup>2</sup>

How can a servant, a devoted and dedicated 'servant' like Nanak, usurp that place of his Master who, according to him, is also the Supreme Master of the entire Universe ?

He rather called himself His 'slave', just One of His countless slaves, though a lucky one :

I am a bond-slave of the Lord  
And my name is lucky.  
I was sold at the Master's shop at His bidding  
And now I go the way He bids.<sup>3</sup>

Yes, he was lucky because he was accepted by the Supreme Lord Himself as His own slave. Besides that, he claimed himself, three times in his own writings, to be a 'bard'; but that too of God, the only True Lord. While doing so, he had, as usual, been quite humble and unpretentious :

I am the Lord's bard of low caste.<sup>4</sup>

He also mentioned himself as a 'poet', at two places, and that too, without any sense of pride or self-praise :

'God does everything and causes others to do  
whatever He wills.

He also knows everything',  
So says Nanak, the poet of the Lord.<sup>5</sup>

1. ਸਾਹਿਬੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਏਕੋ ਹੈ, ਏਕੋ ਹੈ, ਭਾਈ ! ਏਕੋ ਹੈ.  
cf. *Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Asa*, p. 350.

2. ਅਪਰੰਪਰ ਪਾਰਬ੍ਰਹਮੁ ਪਰਮੇਸਰੁ, ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰੁ ਮਿਲਿਆ ਸੋਈ ਜੀਉ.  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Sorath*, p. 599.

3. ਮੁਲ ਖਰੀਦੀ ਲਾਲਾ ਗੋਲਾ, ਮੇਰਾ ਨਾਉ ਸਭਾਗਾ  
ਗੁਰ ਕੀ ਬਚਨੀ ਹਾਟਿ ਬਿਕਾਨਾ, ਜਿਤੁ ਲਾਇਆ ਤਿਤੁ ਲਾਗਾ.  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Maru*, p. 991.

4. ਹਉ ਢਾਢੀ ਕਾ ਨੀਚ ਜਾਤਿ ।  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Asa*, p. 468.

5. ਕਤੇ ਕਰਾਏ ਸਭ ਕਿਛੁ ਜਾਣੈ, ਨਾਨਕ ਸਾਇਰ ਇਵ ਕਹਿਆ  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Asa*, p. 434.

and that—

‘My breath, flesh and soul—all are Yours, O Lord !  
To me You are extremely dear ;  
O You, the True Provider of all’ !  
So says Nanak, the poet of the Lord.<sup>1</sup>

At times, he also called himself a ‘pedlar’ of God, the Almighty :

I am a pedlar of my all-pervading Lord  
And deal only in the merchandise of His Name.<sup>2</sup>

And at other times, a ‘beggar’, just a beggar of His kind vision, His benevolent look at His gracious gate :

With my hands as the begging-bowl,  
I crave nothing but Your vision  
Which I beg day after day at Your door.  
Bless me Lord ! with Your gracious sight,  
I call as a beggar at Your gate.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, all that he thought or uttered, he did that in the name of God. He Himself stated, at least in two hymns :

I spoke only when You, O God !  
Inspired me to speak.<sup>4</sup>

and

As the Word comes to me,  
So I make it known, O Lalo !<sup>5</sup>

1. ਸਾਸੁ ਸਾਸੁ ਸਭ ਜੀਉ ਤੁਮਾਰਾ, ਤੂੰ ਮੈ ਖਰਾ ਪਿਆਰਾ,  
ਨਾਨਕੁ ਸਾਇਰੁ ਦੇਵ ਕਹਤੁ ਹੈ, ਸਚੇ ਪਰਵਦਗਾਰਾ !  
cf. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., *Rag Dhanasri*, p. 660.
2. ਮੈ ਬਨਜਾਰਨਿ ਰਾਮ ਕੀ,  
ਤੇਰਾ ਨਾਮੁ ਵਖਰੁ ਵਾਪਾਰੁ ਜੀ.  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Gauri*, p. 157.
3. ਭਉ ਤੇਰਾ ਭਾਂਗ ਖਲੜੀ ਮੇਰਾ ਚੀਤੁ  
ਮੈ ਦੇਵਾਨਾ ਭਇਆਤੀਤੁ ;  
ਕਰ ਕਾਸਾ ਦਰਸਨ ਕੀ ਭੂਖ  
ਮੈ ਦਰਿ ਮਾਗਉ ਨੀਤਾ ਨੀਤ.  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Tilang*, p. 721.
4. ਤਾ ਮੈ ਕਹਿਆ ਕਹਣੁ, ਜਾ ਤੁਝੇ ਕਹਾਇਆ  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Wadhans*, p. 566.
5. ਜੈਸੀ ਮੈ ਆਵੈ ਖਸਮ ਕੀ ਬਾਣੀ  
ਤੇਸੜਾ ਕਰੀ ਗਿਆਨੁ, ਵੇ ਲਾਲੋ !  
*Ibid.*, *Rag Tilang*, p. 722.

How could one so sincerely and intensely devoted to God, even pose himself to be God or God-incarnate? How could a soul so dedicated to Him ever be misunderstood as proclaiming himself to be anything but "man"? He rather consistently and scrupulously avoided to claim any Divinity and Godhead for himself; and even went to the extent of proclaiming:

The immaculate Name of God alone  
is my sole base.<sup>1</sup>

and that—

By repeating the Name of God, I live;  
By forgetting it, I die.<sup>2</sup>

All that he confidently claimed for himself, on the other hand, was that he was a God-fearing, God-imbued, God-intoxicated man:

Your fear, O God, is my hemp  
And my mind is the pouch which holds it;  
And I have thus become intoxicated with Your love.<sup>3</sup>

Explaining that, too, he made it more than clear that

He, indeed, is mad  
Who holds the Master dear,  
Considers himself unworthy,  
And the rest of the world good.<sup>4</sup>

1. ਨਿਰਮਲ ਨਾਮੁ ਮੇਰਾ ਆਧਾਰੁ.  
cf. *Guru Granth Sahib, Rag Asa*, p. 412.

2. ਆਖਾ ਜੀਵਾ, ਵਿਸਰੈ ਮਰਿ ਜਾਉ  
*Ibid., Rag Asa*, p. 9.

3. ਭਉ ਤੇਰਾ ਭਾਂਗ, ਖਲੜੀ ਮੇਰਾ ਚੀਤੁ,  
ਮੈਂ ਦੀਵਾਨਾ ਭਇਆ ਅਤੀਤੁ.  
*Ibid., Rag Tilang*, p. 721.

4. ਤਉ ਦੇਵਾਨਾ ਜਾਣੀਐ, ਜਾ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਧਰੇ ਪਿਆਰ  
ਮੰਦਾ ਜਾਣੈ ਆਪ ਕਉ, ਅਵਰੁ ਭਲਾ ਸੰਸਾਰੁ.  
*Ibid., Rag Maru*, p. 991.

He also stated that he was a man commissioned and blessed by God with His service. While describing his first audience with the Supreme Lord, he sang out :

I was a bard out of work.  
 God blessed me with His service and commanded me  
 to sing His praises night and day.  
 He summoned me to His eternal abode,  
 bestowed on me the robe of the praise  
 of His true Name ;  
 And fed me with the Nectar-Name of the Great Truth.<sup>1</sup>

The earliest available record of this event of enlightenment and divine assignment, reads as under :

The Baba went to the Divine Court  
 and received from there the gift of the priceless  
 Name and sweet humility.  
 From there he fixed a thoughtful gaze on the  
 world below and found it ablaze in agony.  
 There was no guide or teacher, and a chaotic darkness  
 prevailed all around.  
 The whole humanity was groaning in anguish.  
 The Baba then donned the garb of a monk,  
 laid the path of true renunciation,  
 and set out for the reformation of the whole world  
 and the regeneration of all mankind.<sup>2</sup>

1. ਹਉ ਢਾਢੀ ਵੇਕਾਰੁ ਕਾਰੈ ਲਾਇਆ । ਰਾਤਿ ਦਿਹੈ ਕੈ ਵਾਰ ਧੁਤਹੁ ਫੁਰਮਾਇਆ  
 ਢਾਢੀ ਸਚੈ ਮਹਲਿ ਖਸਮਿ ਬੁਲਾਇਆ । ਸਚੀ ਜਿਫਤਿ ਸਾਲਾਹ ਕਪੜਾ ਪਾਇਆ  
 ਸਚਾ ਅੰਮ੍ਰਿਤ ਨਾਮੁ ਭੋਜਨੁ ਅਇਆ । ਗੁਰਮਤੀ ਖਾਧਾ ਰਜਿ ਤਿਨਿ ਸੁਖੁ ਪਾਇਆ  
 ਢਾਢੀ ਕਰੇ ਪਸਾਉ ਸਬਦੁ ਵਜਾਇਆ । ਨਾਨਕ ਸਚੁ ਸਾਲਾਹਿ ਪੂਰਾ ਪਾਇਆ ।  
 cf. *Guru Granth Sahib, op. cit., Rag Majh, p. 150.*

2. ਬਾਬਾ ਪੈਧਾ ਸਚ-ਖੰਡਿ, ਨਉ ਨਿਧਿ ਨਾਮੁ ਗਰੀਬੀ ਪਾਈ ।  
 ਬਾਬਾ ਦੇਖੈ ਧਿਆਨ ਧਰਿ, ਜਲਤੀ ਸਭਿ ਪ੍ਰਿਥਵੀ ਦਿਸਿ ਆਈ ।  
 ਬਾਝਹੁ ਗੁਨੁ ਗੁਬਾਰਿ ਹੈ, 'ਹੈ ਹੈ' ਕਰਦੀ ਮੁਈ ਲੁਕਾਈ ।  
 ਬਾਬੇ ਭੇਖ ਬਣਾਇਆ, ਉਦਾਸੀ ਕੀ ਰੀਤਿ ਚਲਾਈ ।  
 ਚੜ੍ਹਿਆ ਸੋਧਣਿ ਧਰਤਿ ਲੁਕਾਈ ।

cf. *Varan Bhai Gurdas, op. cit., canto no. 1, stanza no. 24.*

His own picture of the contemporary scene is no less graphic, terrible and painful. In an effort to express his deep anguish and agony over such a chaotic situation and total evil of his times, Guru Nanak himself stated, for instance :

1. This dark age is like a drawn knife,  
rulers are butchers,  
and righteousness has flown away on wings.  
In this dark night of utter falsehood,  
the moon of truth is nowhere visible.  
I have groped and groped  
and this vain search has bewildered me ;  
no path is visible through this darkness.<sup>1</sup>
2. O, what a world is this !  
No true friend, no guide is left in it.  
Even the brothers and other relatives have lost  
all element of affection.  
O, it is for this world that people  
lose even their faith !<sup>2</sup>
3. Babar, the Mughal, has rushed from Kabul  
with sin as his marriage-party  
And demands, in forced marriage,  
the possession of our motherland.<sup>3</sup>

- 
1. ਕਲਿ ਕਾਤੀ ਰਾਜੇ ਕਾਸਾਈ, ਧਰਮੁ ਪੰਥ ਕਰਿ ਉਡਰਿਆ  
ਕੂੜੁ ਅਮਾਵਸ ਸਚੁ ਚੰਦ੍ਰਮਾ, ਦੀਸੈ ਨਾਹੀ ਕਹ ਚੜਿਆ !  
ਹਉ ਭਾਲਿ ਵਿਕੁੰਨੀ ਹੋਈ  
ਆਧੋਰੈ ਰਾਹੁ ਨ ਕੋਈ।  
*cf. Guru Granth Sahib, op. cit., Rag Majh, p. 145.*
  2. ਨਾਨਕੁ ਦੁਨੀਆ ਕੈਸੀ ਹੋਈ !  
ਸਾਲਕੁ ਮਿਤੁ ਨ ਰਹਿਓ ਕੋਈ;  
ਭਾਈ ਬੰਧੀ ਹੋਤੁ ਚੁਕਾਇਆ  
ਦੁਨੀਆ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਦੀਨੁ ਗਵਾਇਆ ।  
*Ibid!., Slok Varan Te Vadhik, p. 1410.*
  3. ਪਾਪ ਕੀ ਜੇਵ ਲੈ ਕਾਬਲਹੁ ਧਾਇਆ  
ਜੋਰੀ ਮੰਗੈ ਦਾਨੁ, ਵੇ ਲਾਲੋ !  
*Ibid., Rag Tilang, p. 722.*



4. People are singing the wedding-songs  
of murder and slaughter.  
The wedded-ones are being anointed  
with blood instead of saffron.<sup>1</sup>
5. Times are gone when people knew  
the way of true Union and Truth.  
Now even places of worship stand polluted,  
leading to the all-round degradation of the mankind.<sup>2</sup>
6. The Qazi utters lies and so eats filth ;  
The Brahmin slays life and then goes to perform ablution ;  
The blind Yogi himself does not know the way to God ;  
All three, thus, lead the way to desolation.<sup>3</sup>

## III

Guru Nanak, reverently and very frequently, used two very typical and expressive names for God, viz. *Kartar* (i.e. the Creator) and *Nirankar* (i.e. the Formless). As stated earlier :

ਤੁਹੀ ਹੈ ਨਿਰੰਕਾਰ ਕਰਤਾਰ, ਨਾਨਕ ਬੰਦਾ ਤੇਰਾ !

*Tuhi hae Nirankar Kartar, Nanak Banda tera.*<sup>4</sup>

was his most favourite and oft-repeated theme.

The usual form and phrase of his blessing for all those who ever met him, treated him well or even rebuked him for his revolutionary thoughts, deeds or pronouncements, was :

ਤੈਨੂੰ ਕਰਤਾਰ ਚਿਤ ਆਵੇ !

*Tenun Kartar chit ave !*<sup>5</sup>

1. ਖੂਨ ਕੇ ਸੋਹਿਲੇ ਗਾਵੀਅਹਿ ਨਾਨਕ  
ਰਤੁ ਕਾ ਕੰਗੂ ਪਾਇ, ਵੇ ਲਾਲੇ !  
*cf. Guru Granth Sahib, op. cit , Rag Tilang, p. 722.*
2. ਕਾਲੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਜੋਗੁ ਨਾਹੀ, ਨਾਹੀ ਸਤ ਕਾ ਵਧੁ  
ਥਾਨਸਟ ਜਗ ਭਰਿਸਟ ਹੋਏ, ਡੁਬਤਾ ਇਵ ਜਗੁ ।  
*Ibid , Rag Dhanasari, p. 662.*
3. ਕਾਦੀ ਕੂੜੁ ਬੋਲਿ ਮਲੁ ਖਾਇ  
ਬ੍ਰਹਮਣੁ ਨਾਵੇ ਜੀਆ ਘਾਇ;  
ਜੋਗੀ ਜੁਗਤਿ ਨਾ ਜਾਣੇ ਅੰਗੁ  
ਤੀਨੇ ਉਜਾੜੇ ਕਾ ਬੰਧੁ ।  
*Ibid , Rag Dhanasari, p. 662.*
4. That is, 'You, O Lord, are the Incorporeal Creator ; Nanak is just a slave of Yours.'
5. That is, 'May you ever remember the Creator' !

He founded a town and named it *Kartarpur* (i. e. the abode of the Creator) which later became his own abode during the last and most momentous phase of his life. This characteristic epithet became so popular that, according to Zulfiqar Ardistani (1615-1670), the first non-Sikh contemporary writer on Sikhism, his sons and disciples came to be known as ਕਰਤਾਰੀ *Kartari*,<sup>1</sup> that is the worshippers of ਕਰਤਾਰ *Kartar*, the Creator.

The epithet, *Nirankar*, too, was so frequently used<sup>2</sup> by him that its continual utterance resounded all around and became his surname in its derivative form, *Nirankari* (from *Nirankar*); so much so that the Guru came to be known as *Nanak Nirankari*, that is, Nanak who is one with the Formless One. The following dialogue, found recorded in Persain and said to have taken place between him and the famous Muslim faqir, Ali Yar at Qandhar, is quite revealing in this respect; and goes a long way to prove Guru Nanak's relation with God and his position as His own man and messenger :

*Ali Yar :* O Darvesh! where have you come from and what is your name ?

*Guru Nanak :* I have come from Panjab, the Land of Five Rivers, and my name is *Nanak Nirankari*.

*Ali Yar :* I have not understood the meaning of the word *Nirankari*.

*Guru Nanak :* *Nirankar* is the name of God. *Nirankari* means one who belongs to Him. Being one of God's own men and associated with Him as such, I am being called so.

*Ali Yar :* Who is your guide and teacher ?

*Guru Nanak :* God, our Creator.

*Ali Yar :* How have you attained God ?

*Guru Nanak :* By subduing my ego and by dwelling on nothing but God.<sup>3</sup>

1. Mohsin Fani (Zulfiqar Ardistani), *Dabistan-i-Mazahib*, Nawal Kishore Edition, Lakhnow-1321 A.H., p. 225; Calcutta—1809.

2. See for instance, *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., pp. 3, 415, 596, 750.

3. Quoted in Gurmukhi script by Partap Singh, Giani, in *Gurmukhi Lecture*, 4th ed., Amritsar-1948, p. 47.

## IV

But Guru Nanak did not stop just here. He not only asserted the Oneness of God and his own relation with Him on the man-and-master level ; but also abhorred vehemently the very idea of His supposed incarnation, and opposed all those who ever claimed any Divinity or Godhead, or who had ever been made out as possessing it by their over-zealous followers. He demolished the very doctrine of divine incarnation, both by word and deed ; and thus "surpassed every other reformer. No Hindu leader had shown the courage to question the correctness of this doctrine. Rama and Krishna had received the homage of everyone as divine beings. It was Nanak who boldly questioned their divinity and brought them down to the level of mortals and declared that the Almighty who created and controlled the whole universe could not add anything to His greatness by assuming human shape to destroy such wretches as Ravana and Kansa".<sup>1</sup> There lies the distinctive superiority of Guru Nanak who, on the one hand, never gave utterance to the sacrilegious idea that he was himself God; and asserted, on the other hand, with all vehemence that :

The most peculiar quality of God is  
that there is none other like Him ;

There never was, nor will ever be another.<sup>2</sup>

How could the person and intention of such a man of God be misunderstood ? How could he be described as bearing a dual conception, as Archer has thought him to be, stating that "there have been two Nanaks, the factual and the 'formless'... He was an historical person ; he is also a theological construction. He is what India and the world in general think he is ; he is also what Sikhs think of him—he is] historic-theological to them, a real person and also a creature of religious fancy"<sup>3</sup>. As far as we know and believe, there is nothing 'dual' or legendary about Guru Nanak, the man and his mission. His true disciples have never considered him so ; have never regarded him either God or God-incarnate, either 'formless' or a

1. Narang, Dr. Sir Gokul Chand, *Transformation of Sikhism*, London-1912, ; 2nd. ed.—1945 p. 39.

2. ਗੁਣੁ ਏਹੋ, ਚੋਰੁ ਨਾਹੀ ਕੋਇ  
ਨਾ ਕੋ ਹੋਆ, ਨਾ ਕੋ ਹੋਇ.

cf. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., *Rag Asa*, p. 349.

3. Archer, J. C., *The Sikhs, in relation to Hindus, Moslems, Christians and Ahmadiyahs ; A Study in Comparative Religion*, Princeton—1946, p. 57.

creature of religious fancy'. For them, Nanak has always been the *Satguru*, the true preceptor, the supreme guide, the great enlightener, the divine master who came to lead men from darkness to light, from evil to righteousness, from immorality to morality; by brining to bear upon them the great force of his unique personality, moral and spiritual vision, creative and dynamic gospel. He came as a man, he lived as a man, and he died as a man; though the like of him is yet to be known to the history of mankind.

## V

He came into being like all men, about whom he later said :  
 We, conceived of flesh and born of flesh,  
 are the vessels of flesh<sup>1</sup>.

Born in a respected family on the banks of the Ravi, 505 years ago,<sup>2</sup> he was the only son of his parents. His father, Mehta Kalu, was a well-to-do *Kashatriya* and an influential official who had enough of land and cattle of his own. His mother, Tripta, was a woman of remarkable personality — religious-minded and simple-hearted. She greatly influenced the early years of his life.

He played in his childhood with his elder sister, Nanaki, who was much attached to him, her only brother. She understood him most and best, and was also the first to recognise his innate greatness and earnest devotion for God.

The chroniclers claim that he was handsome, healthy and ever cheerful. He impressed everyone as a lovely, precocious, intelligent and wide-awake child. Puran Singh tells us : "He was a child of smiles...Whoever saw or touched him accidentally, praised God...He was so beautiful, so mysteriously fair in colour and form, with a radiance that was new to earth. He cast a spell that none could escape. Rai Bular, the Muslim governor of the place of his birth, loved him both as a child and as a boy; the Brahmin teacher loved him. Whoever came into contact with him was irresistibly drawn to him".<sup>3</sup> All that convinced his highly affectionate

1. ਮਸਹੂ ਨਿਮੇ ਮਸਹੂ ਜਮੇ, ਹਮ ਮਸੈ ਕੇ ਭਾਠੇ.  
 cf. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., *Rag Malar*, p. 1290.
2. On Vaisakh 20, sudi 3, 1526 Bk.S. (April 15, 1469 A.D.), at Talwandi Rai Bhoie (now known after him as Nankana Sahib) to the southwest of Lahore, West Panjab (now in Pakistan).
3. Puran Singh, Prof., *The Book of the Ten Masters*, London-1926, p. 1.

sister that her brother was born to fulfil a definite purpose, to play a historic role.

When he grew into a boy, he displayed immense love and sympathy for his playmates. He bore a serene countenance, reflecting wisdom and fellow-feeling. He used to talk little and was very humble and sweet in his speech. He slept little and ate only what was a bare necessity. At times, he appeared to draw himself in contemplative moods and indicated a deep religious bent of mind and signs of an unusual character.

He went to school at an early age and astonished his teachers and class-fellows with his conduct, devotion and inborn knowledge. After finishing his studies with the Pandit and the Maulvi of the place, he took to private study and spent much of his time in meditation and in the company of the learned and religious men.

His father held a good position in society and enjoyed full confidence of Rai Bular, the head of the estate. Nanak being his only son, he had naturally pinned all hopes on him and wanted him to become a successful man. So, as he grew in age and reached his majority, he was made to try one trade after another, viz. farming, business, service, etc. But, as he was occupied mostly in meditating on God, associating with the holy, pursuing the truth and serving humanity, his mind could not be engrossed in worldly affairs, of course, much against the wishes of his parents and relatives.

In order, therefore, to tie him down to the earth, they married him to the pious and dutiful Sullakhni, the daughter of Mul Chand, a Chona Khatri of Batala. He led a happy married life and was blessed with two sons — Sri Chand and Lakhmi Das. But they, too, could not entangle Nanak. They could neither stand in the way of his mission of life nor could hold him back from his passion for serving the suffering humanity. While quite a boy, says Gokul Chand, "his indignation had been aroused by the hypocrisy and cant that stalked throughout the land. He, at once, made up his mind to devote his life to the service of his nation, and by precept and by example bring his people back to a religion of simplicity and sincerity, to wean them from the worship of stock and stone, restore them to the pure worship of their ancient forefathers and make them once more able to stand their ground as a nation".\*

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\* Narang, *Transformation of Sikhism*, op. cit., pp. 31-32.

The time for implementing that decision, with all his zeal and drive, came when he was a full-blooded youth. He was living then with his deeply devoted sister at Sultanpur, on the bank of the river Bein, and was working efficiently and honestly as the storekeeper of Nawab Daulat Khan, the Lodhi Governor of the area.

It was here that he took stock of the entire situation, prevailing inside and outside India which was passing then through a great social, political and spiritual crisis. It was here, again, that he was summoned to God's audience and was called to take up the mission of his life. It was here, too, that he, to the utter amazement of all, came out suddenly with his historic trumpet-blast :

There is neither a Hindu,

Nor a Mussalman (but only man).<sup>1</sup>

and shook the entire surroundings with his revolutionary ideas and actions. "Here it was," to quote Vivekananda, "that the gentle Nanak preached his marvellous love for the world. Here it was that his broad heart was opened, and his arms outstretched to embrace the whole world, not only of Hindus but of Mohammedans, too."<sup>2</sup> From here, he started then on his historic tours, spread over a long period of about two decades and directed one after another towards east, south, north and west. He left from here on an unparalleled mission, leaving behind his young wife and little sons, and disappearing soon into the wide-open world, in order to respond to the Divine Call ; to carry out God's Mandate to guide; to enunciate a universal creed; to serve his fellow-men and to apprise them of the errors that had crept into their moral, social, religious and political life ; to lead them from chaos to order, from evil to righteousness ; and also to inspire institutionalized religion with moral fervour; to enthuse teachers of religious life with his moral vision ; and, above all, to seek Men of God, as he himself stated, thus, during his dialogue with the eminent Sidhas of the day<sup>1</sup> :

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1. In his own words :

ਨਾ ਕੋ ਹਿੰਦੂ, ਨਾ ਮੁਸਲਮਾਨ ।

2. Vivekananda, Swami, from *A Lecture Delivered by him in Raja Dhyani Singh's Haveli at Lahore in 1897.*

**They asked :**

Why have you forsaken your home and become a recluse ?  
 Why are you donning the garb of a mendicant ?  
 What is it that you seek to trade in ?  
 And how will you ferry your following across ?<sup>1</sup>

**He answered :**

I left my home in search of the righteous  
 And followed this course to evolve a new philosophy of life.  
 Being a pedlar of truth, I am out to trade in truth.  
 It is through the Men of God  
 That I shall ferry my following across.<sup>2</sup>

## VI

Thus left this great Man of God in the prime of his youth, marshalling all the qualities of his head and heart, body and soul for conveying God's Word to His people and for serving them without any distinction of caste and creed, colour and country. He travelled far and wide with a unique spiritual wanderlust "such as has seldom taken hold of any man known to history."<sup>3</sup> He visited centres of religious, social and cultural activities; sought the company of leaders, scholars and divines ; met people of all castes and creeds, status and professions over nearly the whole of southern Asia.

## 1. ਸਿੱਧਾਂ ਨੇ ਪੁਛਿਆ :

‘ਕਿਸੁ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਗ੍ਰਿਹੁ ਤਜਿਓ ਉਦਾਸੀ ?

ਕਿਸੁ ਕਾਰਣਿ ਇਹੁ ਭੇਖੁ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ?

ਕਿਸੁ ਵਖਰ ਕੇ ਤੁਮ ਵਣਜਾਰੇ ?

ਕਿਉਕਰਿ ਸਾਥੁ ਲੰਘਾਵਹੁ ਪਾਰੇ ?

cf. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., *Rag Ramkali*, p. 939.

## 2. ਗੁਰੂਦੇਵ ਨੇ ਦਸਿਆ :

‘ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਖੋਜਤ ਭਏ ਉਦਾਸੀ

ਦਰਸਨ ਕੈ ਤਾਈ ਭੇਖ ਨਿਵਾਸੀ ;

ਸਾਚ ਵਖਰ ਕੇ ਹਮ ਵਣਜਾਰੇ

ਨਾਨਕ ਗੁਰਮੁਖਿ ਉਤਰਸਿ ਪਾਰੇ’.

*Ibid*, p. 939.

3. cf. *The Seeker's Path*, op. cit., p.x.

He travelled not only throughout the length and breadth of the Indian Subcontinent, but went as far as Tibet in the north, Ceylon in the south, Arabia and Afghanistan in the west, and Burma and China in the east. He is believed to have travelled, thus, over a greater part of land and for a greater period of time than any other prophet or founder of a religion. "And when we consider the difficulties of moving about, the hardships of times, and the diversity of political, social and religious regions, through which he had to pass during his travels, we cannot but marvel at the energy and patience with which he adapted himself to the ever-changing forces of his time."<sup>1</sup> When we add to this, for our consideration, the aim and object of this uphill task undertaken by a solitary man so boldly and fearlessly, and accomplished also so efficiently and successfully, we are simply wonder-struck at the scope of his mission, vastness of his field and consistence of his character. As we can safely say, he did not go out to earn riches, or name or fame for himself or his family, or to enjoy the pleasure of visiting new places and meeting different people. Accompanied mostly by the Muslim rebeck-player, Mardana, he generally walked his way through or might have used, at times, the available means of conveyance for all his journeys. He undertook them purposely for the "reformation of the whole world ; for the regeneration of all mankind;"<sup>2</sup>; for conveying God's name to every nook and corner ; for telling all men that "God is all-in-all and that purity of mind is the first of objects"<sup>3</sup>; for filling the minds of the downtrodden with enthusiasm ; and also for calling upon them to live a virtuous and harmonious life, cherishing the love and fear of none but of God, their only creator and sustainer.

These incessant travels went a long way in bringing about the desired reformation and regeneration, and in spreading his universal message far and wide. They also brought to the forefront the unique qualities of Nanak, the man and the missionary of God. During those exceptionally long years of travel, in India and abroad, "he had seen and heard so much, had occasion to think things over so deeply, had

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1. Teja Singh, *Prof.*, *Guru Nanak and His Mission*, pt. ii, Lahore-1918, p. 1.
  2. cf. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, op. cit., canto no : 1, stanza no : 24.
  3. Cunningham, J. D., *A History of the Sikhs, from the Origin of the Nation to the Battle of the Sutlej*, London-1849, p. 40.



conversed with so many of the great men of the age, and had himself grown so much in stature that, besides being the foremost man of his time, he had become one to whom later ages will always pay that tribute which the best of humanity deserve.”<sup>1</sup>

## VII

The man in Nanak did not sit at rest even on his return home after such extensive and arduous journeys. He settled on the right bank of the Ravi at Kartarpur and resumed living there as a full-fledged householder. According to Bhai Gurdas :

When Guru Nanak returned to Kartarpur  
He put off the pilgrim's dress  
And wore the simple garments of a family man.  
He sat on the *manji* (cot).  
And continued his spiritual instruction to all.”<sup>2</sup>

This was the last phase of his life. It combined “a life of disciplined devotion with worldly activities, set in the context of normal family life and regular<sup>3</sup> *Satsang*.”<sup>4</sup>

He took to farming to support his family and to run the common kitchen. “His people came and worked with him in the fields. The Guru took keen delight in sowing wheat, and reaping the golden harvests. *He was of the people*. Once again, his stores were open to them. Bread and water were ready for all at all hours of the day, and crowds came and freely partook of the Guru's gifts. All commers were filled from the Guru's treasury of thought and love and power; the diseased and the distressed were healed by him.

He was an old man then; and he loved to see the crowds of God's disciples, coming from the distant Kabul and Central Asia and Assam and southern India — all the places where he had been in his younger days.

In the trackless world of that time, the old Father of his people

1. cf. *The Seeker's Path*, op. cit., p. xiii.

2. ਬਾਬਾ ਆਜਾ ਕਰਤਾਰਪੁਰਿ, ਭੇਖ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਸਗਲ ਉਤਾਰਾ  
ਪਹਿਰ ਸੰਸਾਰੀ ਕੱਪੜੇ, ਮੰਜੀ ਬੈਠ ਕੀਆ ਅਵਤਾਰਾ.

cf. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, op. cit, canto no. 1, stanza no. 38.

3. That is, congregation of the holy.

4. McLeod, Dr. W. H., *Guru Nanak and Sikh Religion*,  
Oxford—1968, p. 228.

travelled on foot, singing his Hymns of Nam and gathering every trace of love. The Afghan and the Baloch, the Turk and the Tartar, the Sufi and the Brahman, the white and the dark races mingled in his great heart. The disciples, both men and women, came from all directions and took part freely in the songs of the Guru.

So great was the reverence of his own country for him, that Pir Baha-ud-din, the great Sufi teacher who counted his followers by thousands, one morning suddenly turned his back on Qaba (which no Moslem would do), and began bowing in his *namaz* (prayer) in the direction of Kartarpur. 'Why so'? cried his faithful followers in alarm, 'This morning I see the light of God in this direction, my friends', said he".<sup>1</sup>

### VIII

It was here at Kartarpur that Lehna, the flame-worshipper, came to him, just by chance; and was so impressed with the piety, glory and searching wisdom of the Master that he came never to go back. "Beyond all expression was the love on each side between Lehna and Guru Nanak. The heights Budhha attained by his mighty struggle, Lehna attained through love... Nanak in this divine statue of love, chiselled his own image."<sup>1</sup> Feeling his own end drawing near, he renamed him (Lehna) as Angad (i.e. part of his ownself) and appointed him his successor, in preference to either of his sons.

The bards, Satta and Balwand, contemporaries of Guru Arjan, the Fifth Nanak, tell us that—

When Angad was found true,  
He was installed on the throne ;

and that—

The mode of life and the light of Angad  
Were the same as those of his Master.  
The Master had merely changed the body.<sup>2</sup>

1. cf. *The Book of the Ten Masters*, op. cit., pp. 25-27.

2. ਗੁਰ ਅੰਗਦ ਦੀ ਦੋਹੀ ਫਿਰੀ, ਸਚੁ ਕਰਤੈ ਬੰਧਿ ਬਹਾਲੀ

ਨਾਨਕੁ ਕਾਇਆ ਪਲਟੁ ਕਰਿ, ਮਲਿ ਤਖਤੁ ਬੈਠਾ ਸੈ ਭਲੀ.

cf. *Var Satta and Balwand in Siri Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit.,  
*Raga Ramkali*, p. 967.

The "light thus merged in the light," to quote Guru Arjan, and the man was "fulfilled."<sup>1</sup> The 'fulfilment' came on September 22, 1539, when he, anticipating his soul's union with the Supreme Soul, the Union as if of the Blessed Bride with the Divine Spouse, asked his kin, devotees, disciples and others to —

Sing the praises of my Lord, my fearless God,  
Whose song of praise brings ever-lasting solace...  
The appointed hour of marriage (Union) has come.  
Come my mates and cluster round me.  
Anoint me, pour oil on the threshold  
And bless me that I may meet my Lord."<sup>2</sup>

Singing, thus, the Word of the Lord up to the last moment of his stay on the earth, the Man in Nanak returned to his Master who had sent him here in response to the call of the suffering humanity.

Strangely enough, a dispute arose among his followers about the disposal of his earthly remains. The Hindus as well as the Muslims claimed them as their own and insisted on cremating or burying him, according to their respective customs. And they both, imbued with immense affection and reverence for the departed Master, satisfied themselves by raising, in their own way, two shrines in his memory with a common wall between them. This was an event unique in the annals of religion, in the history of mankind.

## IX

The man who made such a history and left behind a unique tradition of holiness and disciplined worldliness, service and self-sacrifice, tolerance

1. ਸੂਰਜ ਕਿਰਣਿ ਮਿਲੇ, ਜਲਕਾ ਜਲੁ ਹੂਆ ਰਾਮ  
ਜੋਤੀ ਜੋਤਿ ਰਲੀ, ਸੰਪੂਰਨੁ ਥੀਆ ਰਾਮ.  
cf. *Guru Granth Sahib*, op. cit., *Rag Bilawal*, p. 846.
2. ਤੁਮ ਗਾਵਹੁ ਮੇਰੇ ਨਿਰਭਉ ਕਾ ਸੋਹਿਲਾ  
ਹਉ ਵਾਰੀ ਜਿਤੁ ਸੋਹਿਲੈ ਸਦਾ ਸੁਖੁ ਹੋਇ ।...  
ਸੰਬਤਿ ਸਾਹਾ ਲਿਖਿਆ ਮਿਲਿ ਕਰਿ ਪਾਵਹੁ ਤੇਲੁ,  
ਦੇਹੁ ਸਜਣ ਅਸੀਸੜੀਆ ਜਿਉ ਹੋਵੈ ਸਾਹਿਬ ਸਿਉ ਮੇਲੁ ।  
ਘਰਿ ਘਰਿ ਏਹੋ ਪਾਹੁਚਾ ਸਦੜੇ ਨਿਤ ਪਵੈਨਿ  
ਸਦਣਹਾਰਾ ਸਿਮਰੀਐ ਨਾਨਕ ਸੋ ਦਿਹੁ ਆਵੈਨਿ.  
*Ibid*, *Rag Gauri Deepki*, p. 12.

and benevolence, creative and practical activity, was himself a unique, an extraordinary man.

Swami Anānda Acharya has adored him as the "Prince among India's holy sons".<sup>1</sup> Yes, he was holy, holy to the core ; but he was much more. He was the ideal combination of many qualities, and in him was 'concentrated all that was good and lofty in human nature' !

We do not possess any proper contemporary record to enable us to say authoritatively the exact details about his person and pattern of life. But we can definitely and confidently attempt an assessment of his personality, emerging from a study of his utterances recorded in *Guru Granth Sahib* and preserved, so far, in their original undefiled form. The various *Janamsakhis* and chronicles also help us, in this respect, to a certain extent.

The aforesaid sources prove beyond doubt that his was a lovely, charming and towering personality. Maulvi Ghulam Ali, the Munshi of Farukh Saiyyar, tells us that "he was very handsome."<sup>2</sup> Nature bestowed him with a strong and healthy physique which stood him in good stead in bearing the rigours of long and arduous journeys in the plains and deserts, on water and mountains. He was "not very tall but had long arms", attractive features and white rosy colour.

He kept on changing his dress according to the occasions and environments, customs and climates of the places he happened to visit from time to time.<sup>3</sup> The *Janamsakhi* states that when he started his journeys towards the East, his dress was a strange motley. He put on a mango-coloured jacket with a white sheet stretched over it and a necklace of bones around his neck. He bore a hat like that of a Muslim anchorite and imprinted his forehead like that of a Hindu devout. Thus he looked like neither a usual Hindu, nor a conventional Muslim in that unusual dress and unconventional form partly Hindu, partly Muslim.

It, incidentally, conformed to the form of his name too, the bearer of which could, similarly, not be associated with any particular

1. cf. *Snow-birds*, op. cit., p. 182.

2. Quoted by Principal Teja Singh in *Mahankavi Guru Nanak*, Panjabi Dunya, Patiala-1956, p. 13.

3. See on the next page.

religion, sect or caste ; as he was actually called 'Nanak Dev,' 'Nanak Shah' and 'Nanak Nath' by the Hindus, the Muslims and the Yogis, respectively, by adding, with a deep sense of pride, their usual appellations to it.

But soon after his return home, he dressed himself like a Panjabi householder. Again, when he stepped out for his travels towards the West, he dressed himself like a Muslim pilgrim. Bhai Gurdas has described him as wearing, then, blue robes and carrying a staff, a prayer-mat, an earthen goblet in his hands and the holy book under his arm. On return from the Muslim world, he changed his attire again and dressed himself similarly in the simple garments of a family man.

This occasional and appropriate change of dress\* would afford him immense pleasure and opportunity to feel not only at home but also one with the people he met and the places he visited. His outer appearance and subsequent behaviour simply confirmed that he did really belong to them, to all of them. This together with his physiognomy, bold demeanour, great vision and sincerity of purpose impressed

\*Described as under in an *old* version of the *Janamsakhis* :

(੧) ਪ੍ਰਿਥਮੈ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਪੂਰਬ ਕੀ । ਤਿਤੁ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਨਾਲਿ ਮਰਦਾਨਾ ਰਬਾਬੀ ਥਾ ।  
ਤਦਹੁ ਕੁ ਪਉਣ ਅਹਾਰੁ ਕੀਆ । ਪਹਿਰਾਵਾ ਬਾਬੇ ਕਾ : ਏਕੁ ਬਸਤਰੁ ਅੰਬੋਆ, ਏਕੁ ਬਸਤਰੁ  
ਚਿੱਟਾ । ਏਕੁ-ਪੈਰਿ ਜੁਤੀ, ਏਕੁ ਪੈਰਿ ਖੰਉਸ, ਗਲਿ ਖਫਨੀ, ਸਿਰਿ ਟੋਪੀ ਕਲੰਦਰੀ ; ਮਾਲਾ  
ਹਡਾਂ ਕੀ ; ਮਥੈ ਤਿਲਕੁ ਕੇਸਰ ਕਾ ।.....

(੨) ਦੁਤੀਆ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਕੀਤੀ ਦੱਖਣ ਕੀ । ਅਹਾਰੁ ਤਲੀ ਭਰਿ ਰੇਤ ਕੀ ਕਰਹਿ । ਤਦਹੁ  
ਪੈਰੀਂ ਖੜਾਵਾਂ ਕਾਠ ਕੀਆਂ । ਹਥਿ ਆਸਾ । ਸਿਰਿ ਰਸੇ ਪਲੇਟੇ, ਬਾਂਹਾਂ ਜਾਂਘਾਂ ਰਸੇ ਪਲੇਟੇ ।  
ਮਥੈ ਟਿੱਕਾ ਬਿੰਦਲੀ ਕਾ । ਤਦਹੁ ਨਾਲਿ ਸੈਦੋ ਜਟੁ ਜਾਤ ਘੋਹੋ ਥਾ । ...

(੩) ਤ੍ਰਿਤੀਆ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਉਤਰਖੰਡ ਕੀ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਕਰਣਿ ਲਗੈ । ਤਿਤੁ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਅਕ  
ਦੀਆਂ ਖਖੜੀਆਂ ਅਤੇ ਫੁਲ ਅਹਾਰੁ ਕਰਦਾ ਥਾ, ਪਰਿਸੁਕੇ । ਅਤੇ ਪੈਰੀਂ ਚਮੜਾ, ਅਤੇ ਸਿਰਿ  
ਚਮੜਾ, ਸਾਰੀ ਦੇਹ ਲਪੇਟਿਅਸੁ, ਅਤੇ ਮਥੈ ਟਿੱਕਾ ਕੇਸਰ ਕਾ ।.....

(੪) ਚਉਥੀ ਉਦਾਸੀ ਪੱਛਮ ਕੀ ਹੋਈ । ਪੈਰ ਖੰਉਸਾ ਚੰਮ ਕੀਆਂ, ਅਤੇ ਚੰਮ ਕੀ  
ਸੁਥਣਿ । ਗਲ ਵਿਚਿ ਹਡੀਆਂ ਕੀ ਮਾਲਾ, ਮਥੈ ਟਿੱਕਾ ਬਿੰਦੀ ਕਾ, ਬਾਲਕਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਖੇਡੈ, ਤਬ ਨੀਲੇ  
ਬਸਤ੍ਰ ਥੇ ।.....

cf. India Office Library, London, Ms. Panj. B-6, popularly known as *Walait Wali Janamsakhi* or *Puratan Janamsakhi*, printed by the Singh Sabha, Lahore in 1884 and by the Khalsa Samachar, Amritsar (ed. by Dr. Bhai Vir Singh) in 1926, pp. 29, 90, 105, 113, 114.

all at home and abroad, won their confidence in him and inspired them with spontaneous reverence for him. They came forward to see him, to listen to him, to talk to him, and subsequently to follow the way shown by him, not because of any dogma (which he never had) or any miracle (which he never exhibited) or any promise of intercession (which he never gave), but because of the glow of his message, the goodness of his heart and the glamour of his personality.

## X

The personality of such a man would, indeed, have been exceedingly impressive, rather highly captivating. And it did wonderfully well on all occasions, at all places, inside and outside India. His touch, sight and word alone converted even robbers into friends of humanity, man-eaters into citizens of the world, ascetics into devoted householders and tyrants into servants of the society. Bhai Gurdas has given an excellent graphic account of this aspect too, in his inimitable way, in the following words, for instance :

1. At his lion-like appearance,  
the deer-like ignorance took to heels...
2. Whichever place he happened to visit,  
became consecrated and turned into a seat of worship.
3. Who can stand up to the grandeur  
of his personality ?
4. The Sidhas of Mount Sumer were taken aback to see him  
and were soon convinced of his greatness,  
and failed to convert him to their own creed.\*

An inscription dated 912 A.H. (1506 A.D.), inscribed in Turkish and preserved till today in a shrine outside the town of Baghdad, is a living monument to the impact of his charming and inspiring per-

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\* cf. *Varan Bhai Gurdas*, op cit., canto no. 1, stanzas no. 27 & 31.

1. ਸਿੰਘ ਬੁਕੇ ਮਿਰਗਾਵਲੀ, ਭੰਨੀ ਜਾਇ ਨ ਧੀਰ ਧਰੋਆ...
2. ਜਿਥੇ ਬਾਬਾ ਪੈਤ ਧਰੇ, ਪੂਜਾ ਅਸਣ ਬਾਪਣ ਸੋਆ...
3. ਸਤਿਗੁਰ ਅਗਮ ਅਗਾਧ ਪੁਰਖ, ਕੇਹੜਾ ਝਲੇ ਗੁਰੂ ਦੀ ਝਾਲਾ?...  
ਜਿਥੇ ਮਨੇ ਬਿਚਾਰਿਆ, ਕਿਵੇਂ ਦਤਤਨ ਇਹ ਲੇਵੇ ਬਾਲਾ  
ਐਸਾ ਜੋਗੀ ਕਲੀ ਮਾਹਿ, ਹਜੇ ਪੰਥ ਕਰੇ ਉਜਿਆਲਾ.
4. ਸਿਧ ਪੁੱਛਣ ਸੁਣ ਬਾਲਿਆ! ਕੌਣ ਸਕਤ ਤੁਹਿ ਏਥੇ ਲਯਾਈ ? ...

sonality even in that distant stronghold of Islam. The shrine stands at a place where he was ordered to be stoned to death because of the alleged 'blasphemies' committed by him in singing the limitlessness of God and offering his prayer in an unconventional way. But the fury and *fatwa* (verdict) of the Pir, the wrath and uproar of the people who considered his actions and utterances an affront to Islam and to the holy Prophet, turned soon into reverence and understanding on seeing their victim from close quarters and on finding in him nothing but an embodiment of love and truth, humility and sweetness, compassion and contentment, forgiveness and forbearance. The event, its sequel and impact, as recorded by Swami Ananda Acharya on reading that historic inscription, reveals in no less way the piety, loftiness and lasting influence of that great Man of God, in addressing whom he wrote around 1918 :

Upon this simple slab of granite didst thou sit,  
discoursing of fraternal love and holy light,  
O Guru Nanak, Prince among India's holy sons !

What song from the source of the Seven Waters  
thou didst sing to charm the soul of Iran !  
What peace from Himalaya's lonely caves and forests  
thou didst carry to the vine-groves  
and rose-gardens of Baghdad !

What light from Badrinaths' snowy peak  
thou didst bear to illumine the heart of Bahlol,  
thy saintly Persian disciple ?

Eight fortnights Bahlol hearkened to thy words  
on life and the Path and Spring Eternal,  
While the moon waxed and waned  
in the pomegranate-groove  
beside the grassy desert of the dead.

And after thou hast left him  
to return to thy beloved Bharat's land,  
The faqir, it is said, would speak to none  
nor listen to the voice of man or angel.

His fame spread far and wide  
and the Shah came to pay him homage,  
But the holy man would take no earthly treasure  
nor hear the praise of kings and courtiers.

Thus lived he—lonely, devoted, thoughtful  
for sixty winters,  
sitting before the stone  
whereon thy sacred feet had rested.

And ere he left this House of Ignorance,  
He wrote these words on the stone :

‘Here spake the Hindu Guru  
Nanak to Faqir Bahlol, and for  
these sixty winters since the  
Guru left Iran, the soul of  
Bahlol has rested on the  
Master’s Word—like a bee  
poised on a dawnlit honey-  
rose’.<sup>1</sup>

That all-absorbing devotion shown by Bahlol<sup>2</sup> till the last breath of his life, does not seem to have any parallel in the religious history of the world.

It was an extraordinary devotion of a ‘man’ for a ‘man’ coming from a foreign land, belonging to a different race, and preaching an unusual religion ; but a man, Oh ! What A Man ! the like of whom is yet to be known to the history of mankind ; a man whose “life”, according to Sadhu Vaswani, “opened an era in the history of India and Asia—in the history of humanity.” “At rare intervals in history,” he adds, “doth appear a man like Nanak”.<sup>3</sup>

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1. cf. *Snow-birds*, op. cit., pp. 182—184.

2. Sadhu T. L. Vaswani, while dedicating his book, *A Prophet of the People*, to him, has mentioned him thus : “To Bahlol, the Blessed, the Fakir of Baghdad, who became a disciple of Guru Nanak and ever-after felt as a stranger in this world, and meditated for sixty years on the Master and his Word—until the white wings of Death carried him Home, to where abide Understanding and Peace, Light and Love.—T. L. Vaswani”.

3. Vaswani, Sadhu T.L., *A Prophet of the People*, Poona-1952 (c), pp. 13 & 15.



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